

Madam Chair, Members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Christina Canfield, and I'm testifying on behalf of the members, we represent at the Michigan Education Association.

First, I would like to thank Representative Yonker for his work on the issue of district provided professional development. I know this is an area he has been working on for a very long time, and it shows in the quality of this package of bills. Thank you. We have heard from our members for years that quality professional development recharges and energizes them. Opportunities to work collaboratively with and learn from their colleagues, or other experts, on new curriculum, new teaching methods, or problem solving, improves their practice and makes them better teachers. We have also heard, and I'm guessing Rep. Yonker, and many of you have heard the same thing, not all professional development (PD) has that same impact.

Our members, and school administrators, are trying to balance the need for quality PD while minimizing the time teachers spend out of the classroom. Sometimes that means three days of PD before students come back in the fall. This often means three full days of being talked at. HB 5156 changes days to hours. We strongly support this change. It will allow districts to break up their PD into smaller chunks. While a full day of PD can be wonderful, being able to break it up into smaller sections, especially if it is spread throughout the year, is a powerful change that will make a difference, so thank you.

Regarding HB 5157, we believe administrators have needed PD for years. Given the evaluation legislation that became law last year, it's needed more than ever. Our experience on the front lines shows that many are unprepared to take on the responsibilities of evaluations because their training doesn't cover this area of their job nearly enough, if at all. Thank you for addressing this issue and giving administrators the support they need. They set the tone for the school building. Having a collaborative working environment is best for all the adults, but more importantly, it's best for the students.

MEA is also a strong supporter of mentoring. Many of our locals work with the district on the mentoring program. Others run separate programs in addition to the district's programs. With the number of new teachers who leave the profession in the first 5-7 years, it's more important than ever to provide the support they need to help them survive those first few years and develop into the best teachers possible.

With that said, we do see a few areas of these bills that we hope you will consider modifying. Having a 30 teacher limit for fifty percent of the professional development training would be very difficult for our larger locals. In some of our districts, thirty teachers or less wouldn't allow all teachers from the math department to meet and still count as part of the fifty percent below thirty. I'd like to say this should be left to local control, but I think you would say it's been left to local control and it hasn't happened. Acknowledging that concern, we would like to encourage you to amend the bill to allow for more flexibility. For example, instead of saying 30 teachers, it could say small group meetings. It could be tied to the size of the school district, or you could allow for a range that would give the district the ability to tailor the size of the group to the training provided. We would ask the same thing for the fifty percent. Small group PD is best practice in some instances. But fifty percent is a very high percentage for large

school districts. Could you include a range that again allows the district to deliver the PD in the way best suited for the topic instead of trying to adapt the PD to fit the fifty percent number?

And last, but not least, MEA can never support legislation that punishes the students for the shortcomings of the adults. We understand your desire to ensure the legislation gets implemented faithfully, but we don't believe this method is in the best interest of the students.

Thank you again, Rep. Yonker for this very strong package of bills. We look forward to continuing our conversations with you as this legislation moves forward.

Christina Canfield
Michigan Education Association